

CATECHISM
OF THE THIRD ORDER
OF ST. FRANCIS

~~B X~~
3652
E6
1914

FLS
2014
073685



✓

Class BX 3452

Book E 6

Copyright N^o 1914

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.



Patrons of the Third Order

CATECHISM OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

By Fr. Ferdinand, O.F.M.,
of the Province of the Sacred Heart

*"Whoever shall follow this rule,
peace on them, and mercy."*

Gal. vi, 16.

TEUTOPOLIS, ILLINOIS
FRANCISCAN HERALD

—1914—

BX 3652
E 6
1914

Nihil Obstat,

Franciscus Hubertus Zabel, S. T. D.,
Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur,

†Jacobus Ryan, D. D.,
Episcopus Altonensis.

Imprimatur,

Fr. Benedictus Schmidt, O. F. M.,
Minister Provincialis.

\$ 0.15

NOV 20 1914

© Cl. A 388810

No. 1.

PREFACE

The following pages contain an explanation of the rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, as modified by Pope Leo XIII. The only excuse the writer has for presenting them to the public, is that he was requested to do so by friends and directors of the Third Order, who have sought to impress on him the need of a handy manual of instruction on the nature and the rule of the Order. To facilitate the work of oral instruction, the explanation has been set down in the form of questions and answers, and divided into twelve chapters corresponding to the twelve months of the year of novitiate. The writer has aimed to combine brevity with thoroughness, and he hopes the booklet will meet the wishes of the directors as well as the needs of their charges.

Acknowledgment is due to Fr. Eugene d'Oisy, of whose *Catechisme ou Petit Manuel* the present little work is largely an adaptation.

FR. FERDINAND, O. F. M.

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE,

TEUTOPOLIS, ILLINOIS.

Feast of St. Francis, 1914.

COPYRIGHT, 1914
By
Fr. Ferdinand, O. F. M.

CATECHISM OF THE THIRD ORDER

CHAPTER I

ST. FRANCIS AND HIS ORDERS

1. Who is Saint Francis of Assisi?

St. Francis of Assisi is the illustrious founder of three great religious orders: the Order of Friars Minor, the Order of Poor Clares, and the Third Order.

2. Which are the principal traits of his character?

He was a man of lofty ideals, chivalrous sentiments, and great strength of character; a man thoroughly "Catholic and wholly apostolic," entirely devoted to the Church and to the salvation of souls. He is frequently called the poor, the humble, or the seraphic Francis.

3. By what means did he attain to sanctity?

By his profound and childlike piety which led him to an intimate union with God, and filled him with a burning zeal for his glory and the welfare of men.

4. Which were his favorite devotions?

He was particularly devoted to the mysteries of the lives of our Savior and of his Blessed Mother.

5. What was the mission assigned him by God?

His mission was, to bring about in the world a revival of Christian ideals by the imitation of our Savior's life and virtues.

6. What influence did he exert on society?

He became the reformer of Christian life and morals in the thirteenth century. The impression he left on his own and on succeeding ages, was deep and lasting, his influence making itself felt even to the present day.

7. Which is the first order founded by St. Francis?

It is the Order of Friars Minor or Lesser Brethren, which is divided into three families;

namely, the Franciscans, the Capuchins, and the Conventuals.

8. Which is the second order founded by St. Francis?

The second order is that of the Poor Ladies or Poor Clares, whose aim it is to work for the salvation of souls by prayer and penance. It is divided into divers observances.

9. Which is the third order founded by St. Francis?

It is the Order of Penance, also called simply the Third Order.

10. How is the Third Order divided?

It is divided into the Third Order Regular and the Third Order Secular.

11. How are the members of the Third Order Secular called?

They are called Brethren of Penance or Franciscan Tertiaries.

12. What does the name "Franciscan Tertiaries" signify?

It signifies "of or belonging to the Third Order of St. Francis."

CHAPTER II

THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

13. How many Third Orders are there?

There are eight Third Orders, which differ from each other in name and form, according to their respective affiliation with one or the other of the religious Orders of Franciscans, Dominicans, Servites, Augustinians, Premonstratensians, Minims, Carmelites, and Benedictines.

14. May a person belong to several Third Orders?

No; persons belonging to one Third Order, are not permitted to join another; they are, however, free to affiliate with sodalities or other pious associations not recognized by the Church as orders.

15. What is the Third Order of St. Francis?

It is neither a mere pious society nor a religious order, properly so-called, but a secular order, which, though not binding its members by vows, requires them to wear a habit, to

make a novitiate and a profession, and to live according to a Rule approved by the Church.

16. Is the Third Order a true order?

Yes; it is a true order, because it has been declared such by the Sovereign Pontiffs, and because the members thereof, living according to an approved Rule and under the authority of ecclesiastical superiors, lead a life not unlike that of the members of religious orders.

17. What is the purpose of the Third Order?

Its purpose was aptly defined by St. Francis when he said to Blessed Lucius, "I have been thinking for some time to establish a third order in which persons living in the world may serve God in a perfect manner."

18. How was the Third Order founded?

It was founded by St. Francis when, in the year 1221, he received as the first Tertiaries the Blessed Lucius and his wife Bonadonna. The Order was soon after approved by the Church, which has not ceased to recommend it to the faithful.

19. Did the Third Order grow and prosper?

Yes; from its very beginning the Third Order enjoyed a rapid and marvelous growth; to-day it has a membership of more than three million.

20. Does the Third Order number among its members also illustrious personages?

Yes; popes, bishops, priests, emperors, kings, princes, men of great renown in the world of art and science and literature, in fine, illustrious Christians from all walks of life, have deemed it an honor and a privilege to belong to this Order.

21. What influence did the Third Order exert on society?

The good influence it exerted on society is inestimable. Through the Third Order great numbers of Christians were gained over to the faithful observance of the divine commandments, and society at large profited greatly by the principles of concord, charity, poverty, and humility which the Order tends to promote among its members.

22. Does the Third Order of St. Francis enjoy any spiritual privileges?

Yes; the Church has been pleased to fa-

vor the Third Order with many and great spiritual privileges.

23. Is the Third Order suited to all states and conditions of life?

Yes; the Third Order is suited to all Christians, to the most lowly as well as to the most exalted. The great number of sainted men and women from every walk of life whom this Order has produced, shows that it offers powerful means of sanctity to all Christians, regardless of their rank or station or occupation.

24. Who are the patrons of the Third Order?

The Church has named St. Louis, King of France, patron of the Brethren, and St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, patroness of the Sisters.

25. Is it opportune at the present day to enter the Third Order?

Yes; it is more opportune now than ever to enter the Third Order, in order to revive in one's self and in others the Christian spirit, which is rapidly dying out in many places. This is also the Church's sentiment, repeatedly expressed in these latter days by Popes Leo XIII and Pius X.

CHAPTER III

REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION

26. What is required of those who wish to join the Third Order?

They must be fourteen years of age, of good morals, of peaceable disposition, exact in the practice of faith, of tried obedience to the Church. For married women the consent of their husbands is likewise required.

27. What is the first requirement for admission?

The first requirement is thus stated in the Rule: "It is forbidden to take anyone as a member unless he be more than fourteen years of age." In fixing this age, the Church shows how much it desires that even children be interested in an institution whose purpose it is to teach the first steps in religious life.

28. What is the second requirement?

The Rule says they must be "of good morals." There is no question here of tried virtue or consummate perfection, but only of good Christian morals, such as are the mark of every practical Catholic.

29. What is the third requirement?

The Rule demands that aspirants be “of peaceable disposition,” because without union of hearts and minds no fraternity can prosper or achieve any good.

30. What is the fourth requirement?

The postulant must be “exact in the practice of his Catholic faith;” that is to say, the practice of his faith must be in accord with the doctrine and tradition of the Catholic Church, and must, in consequence, be based on a sufficient knowledge of his religion.

31. What is the fifth requirement?

The postulants must be “of tried obedience to the Roman Catholic and Apostolic See.”

32. How must this obedience manifest itself?

It must manifest itself in a perfect submission to all dogmatic, moral, and disciplinary decisions of the Church and in a profound respect for the Pope, the bishops, the priests, especially, the parish priests.

33. What does the Rule say regarding the admission of married women?

The Rule says, “Married women are not to be admitted without the knowledge and

consent of their husbands; if it is thought that this knowledge and consent should in any case be dispensed with, it should be done only on the motion of the priest who is the judge of the conscience of the woman.”

34. What is to be said of this injunction?

It is admirably designed to preserve the peace of families without, however, imposing on women any restraint prejudicial to their own spiritual welfare; for, the Rule expressly states that this condition may be dispensed with whenever the confessor of the woman deems it advisable.

CHAPTER IV

RECEPTION OF NOVICES

35. Is it necessary to have a religious vocation in order to enter the Third Order?

No; it is not necessary to have a religious vocation in order to become a member of the Third Order; it is sufficient to have the qualities demanded by the Rule and a desire for Christian perfection.

36. To become a Tertiary, is it necessary to join a fraternity of the Third Order?

No; if necessity demands, one may be admitted as an isolated Tertiary. After being received, however, such a Tertiary must make a year's novitiate, and then pronounce his profession as soon as possible.

37. How must an isolated Tertiary conduct himself?

A Tertiary who for some grave reason can not enter a fraternity of the Third Order, must strive conscientiously to learn and to fulfill the precepts of the Rule, and, as much as possible, to keep in touch with the Order; for, to be an isolated Tertiary does not mean to be a negligent and independent member.

38. Is it advantageous to belong to a fraternity of the Third Order?

Yes; it is of great advantage to belong to a regular fraternity, both on account of the spiritual instruction and advancement, and on account of the privileges and indulgences to be gained by the members.

39. What must one do to become a member of the Third Order?

A person desiring to become a member,

must make formal application to the local Director of the Third Order, and if it is agreeable, the applicant at once enters upon the postulate, which lasts till the day fixed by the Director for the reception or investment.

40. How does the reception take place?

The reception into the Third Order takes place in the following manner: On the appointed day the postulant presents himself to a priest having the necessary faculties and says, "Reverend Father, I humbly ask of you the habit of the Third Order of Penance, in order that with it I may more easily obtain eternal salvation." Thereupon, the postulant receives from the priest the habit, the cord, and the lighted candle.

41. What does the habit signify?

The habit of penance with which the Tertiary is clothed, signifies that he must divest himself of the old man with his acts and clothe himself with the new man "who is created according to God in justice and holiness of truth."

42. What does the cord symbolize?

The cord symbolizes holy purity, which the Tertiary must preserve "by extinguish-

ing in himself the passion of lust, that the virtue of continency and chastity may dwell in him.”

43. What does the lighted candle signify?

It signifies the light of Christ, communicated to the Tertiary by the seraphic form of life, “that being dead to the world, he may live for God, shunning the works of darkness.”

44. What does the Rule prescribe regarding the habit?

The Rule says, “The members of the Third Order must wear the customary small scapular and the cord, else they will be deprived of granted rights and privileges.”

45. What is to be noted regarding this precept?

It is to be noted, first, that the Tertiary must never be without his scapular and cord; and, second, that he who, without sufficient reason, fails to wear them, deprives himself of the privileges of the Order.

46. What is to be said regarding the wearing of the large habit of the Third Order?

The large habit or tunic of brown wool

may be outwardly worn only at the monthly reunions of the members and at certain ecclesiastical functions; namely, processions, pilgrimages, general communions, and funerals, provided the members attend in a body. Tertiaries may be likewise clothed in the large habit at the time of their death and burial.

47. What does the Rule say regarding the novitiate?

The Rule simply says that "all who enter the Third Order, whether men or women, shall make a year's novitiate." In order that the profession may be valid, the year of the novitiate must be complete to the day; on the other hand, however, the term of the novitiate should not be prolonged indefinitely.

48. Do the novices enjoy any privileges of the Order?

Yes; the novices participate in all the privileges of the Order, provided they fulfill the obligations, especially that of wearing the habit.

49. What should a novice do when he is tempted to leave the Order?

He should ask of God the grace of perse-

verance, and, if necessary, he should disclose the temptation to the Director.

50. Should a novice ardently desire the grace of profession?

Yes; the novice should have an ardent desire to give himself to God by making profession in the Third Order; accordingly, he should endeavor to render himself worthy of this grace by devout prayer and earnest preparation and by fidelity in observing the Rule.

CHAPTER V

PROFESSION OF MEMBERS

51. What does the Rule say regarding the profession of members?

The Rule says that, after a full year's novitiate, the novices "making the profession prescribed by the Rule of the Order, shall promise to observe the laws of God, to obey the Church, and if they fail in their profession, to make the required satisfaction."

52. How is the profession made?

According to the ceremonial, the novice

clothed in the large habit of the Order, or at least wearing outwardly the scapular and the cord, kneels before the altar, at the feet of the priest, and with hands joined pronounces the formula of profession.

53. How does this formula read?

This formula reads as follows: "I, N., in the presence of Almighty God, in honor of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of Blessed Father Francis, and of all the Saints, promise to observe all the time of my life the commandments of God and the Rule of the Third Order, instituted by the same Blessed Francis, according to the form approved by Nicholas IV and Leo XIII; also, to satisfy at the pleasure of the Visitor, for the transgressions committed against the same Rule."

54. Is the profession made in the Third Order a sacred act?

Yes; it is sacred in itself and in its effects. For this reason, it is attended with holy ceremonies and made in the presence of Almighty God, in honor of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of Blessed Father Francis, and of all the Saints.

55. What is the nature of this profession?

The profession in the Third Order is of its nature not a vow but a promise—a promise, however, of real binding force in virtue of the acceptance of the Church and of the fidelity one owes to one's given word.

56. For how long a time does the Tertiary bind himself?

He binds himself for life; for he says, "I promise to observe the Rule of the Third Order all the time of my life."

57. Is anyone ever permitted to leave the Third Order?

One may leave the Third Order to enter a religious order or congregation. A person who leaves the Third Order for any other reason, does not commit a sin, but he deprives himself of many graces and means of sanctification.

58. Which are the means of persevering in the Order?

These means are: a thorough knowledge of the Rule and of the benefits of the Order, a great devotion to St. Francis, an ardent desire for perfection, and an exact observance of the precepts of the Rule.

59. What is the first thing Tertiaries promise in their profession?

They “promise to observe the laws of God and to obey the Church.” By making this promise they bind themselves more closely to the service of God, but contract no new obligation.

60. What is the second thing Tertiaries promise?

They promise “to observe the Rule of the Third Order, instituted by the Blessed Father Francis.” This Rule, however, is not strictly preceptive, but merely directive, hence not binding under sin.

61. What is the third thing Tertiaries promise?

They promise “to satisfy, at the pleasure of the Visitor, for the transgressions committed against the Rule.” This satisfaction they are bound to render as often as they are called upon to do so, because they have formally obliged themselves thereto.

62. What is the reward promised to the faithful Tertiary?

The priest having accepted the profession of the Tertiary replies, “And I, on the part

of God, if thou observest these things, promise thee life everlasting.' In these words is contained a great consolation for every true child of St. Francis.

63. May a Tertiary pass from one fraternity of the Order to another?

Yes; he may do so with the consent of the respective superiors. In this connection, it is to be noted that a Tertiary may gain the indulgences, and receive the general absolution even in a fraternity other than his own.

64. Which is the greatest benefit that Tertiaries derive from the profession?

The greatest benefit that Tertiaries derive from the profession, consists in this that their whole life is regulated by a Rule approved by the Church and capable of leading them to a high degree of sanctity. In fact, the Rule of the Third Order is nothing but the law of the Gospel applied to the condition of people living in the world.

65. Should Tertiaries faithfully observe the Rule?

Yes; even if the Rule does not oblige under pain of sin, they should, nevertheless, observe it in order to be true to their promise,

and to participate in the benefits of the Franciscan form of life.

CHAPTER VI

PRACTICE OF PENANCE

66. What does the Rule prescribe as to the exterior life of Tertiaries?

The Rule says, "Members of the Third Order will refrain from excessive cost and elegance in adornment and dress, and will observe—each according to his state of life—the rule of moderation."

67. What does this precept imply?

It implies the avoidance of luxury and vain display, and moderation in all things.

68. What is luxury?

Luxury is the free indulgence in costly food, dress, furniture, or anything expensive which gratifies the appetites or tastes.

69. Is luxury pernicious?

Yes; it is pernicious from the Christian and moral standpoint, because it fosters self-

ishness and, in general, is the source of many spiritual evils.

70. What kind of display of dress and ornament is forbidden by the Rule?

The Rule forbids all vain and excessive display inasmuch as it is an obstacle to sanctification and edification.

71. Is a Tertiary permitted to conform in all things to the fashions of the day?

No; for by so doing he would very often act contrary to his vocation not only as Tertiary but even as Christian.

72. What is prescribed on the subject of luxury and display?

It is prescribed that Tertiaries observe the rules of moderation in so far as they apply to each one's state of life. Hence, they may use the goods of this world according to their state or rank, but they should take care to avoid all extravagance and worldliness.

73. What does the Rule say on the subject of dances?

The Rule says, "They will refrain with the utmost care from dances."

74. Are Tertiaries never permitted to attend a dance?

As a general rule, they are not permitted to do so; in exceptional cases, it rests with the Director to decide whether and on what conditions Tertiaries may attend.

75. How should a Tertiary who is forced to attend a dance or ball, conduct himself?

If, by way of exception, a Tertiary attends a dance or ball, he must conduct himself according to the rules of prudence and modesty, and by his interior dispositions render remote the dangers of sin.

76. What does the Rule say relatively to stage-plays?

Tertiaries should "refrain with the utmost caution from dangerous stage-plays," if they do not wish to suffer the loss of their faith and good morals or, at least, of the Franciscan spirit.

77. Are Tertiaries never allowed to assist at dramatic presentations?

Yes; Tertiaries may assist at them so long as they are reasonably certain that nothing objectionable will be presented.

78. What is prescribed regarding repasts?

The Rule prescribes frugality in eating and drinking. This implies that Tertiaries

should not only not eat and drink to excess, but also cultivate habits of abstemiousness by not eating and drinking for the mere pleasure thereof.

79. How should their repasts be sanctified?

The Rule says, "They will neither sit down to table, nor rise up from it without first devoutly and gratefully thanking God." This Christian practice should be fostered above all by Tertiaries.

80. What is prescribed by the Rule regarding fast and abstinence?

"Each will fast on the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and on that of their Father Francis; those will merit great praise who, in addition, in accordance with the original rule of the Tertiaries, either fast on Fridays or abstain from flesh meat on Wednesdays."

81. How should Tertiaries observe the law of fast and abstinence?

They should observe with courage and fidelity the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church, and not ask for a dispensation therefrom unless forced by necessity; and if their condition permits, they should abstain

on Wednesdays or fast on Fridays, as counseled by the Rule.

CHAPTER VII

HOLY SACRAMENTS—DIVINE OFFICE— LAST WILL

82. What does the Rule prescribe on the subject of confession?

The Rule says, "Members will confess their sins each month." They are, therefore, commanded to confess at least once a month, because the Sacrament of Penance is a powerful means of preserving and increasing sanctifying grace and of leading a virtuous life.

83. With what disposition should Tertiaries confess their sins?

They should make each confession as if it were their last one. Hence, they should carefully examine their conscience, make a good act of contrition and a sincere confession, and receive the imparted absolution with the same reverence as if it were the most precious blood

of our Savior, poured over their souls in remission of their sins.

84. What does the Rule say regarding Holy Communion?

The Rule says, "Members will approach the Holy Table monthly." In prescribing monthly Communion, the Rule indicates the least that is expected of Tertiaries. True children of Mother Church and of St. Francis, however, will receive oftener.

85. How often should Tertiaries approach the Holy Table?

If possible, every day; for, this is the express wish of holy Mother Church and the ardent desire of her divine Founder.

86. Why should Tertiaries receive so often?

For the good of their souls and the edification of their neighbor.

87. How should they receive Holy Communion?

They should receive Holy Communion in the state of grace and with the right intention and with all the fervor of which they are capable.

88. Should Tertiaries abstain from Holy Communion if they feel little or no devotion?

No; for true devotion consists not in pious feelings, but in the determined will to honor God by acts of piety.

89. Which is the daily prayer prescribed for Tertiaries?

The daily prayer prescribed for Tertiaries is the divine office.

90. What is the divine office?

It is a formula of prayers daily recited by the members of the clergy and of the religious orders, according to the form laid down by the Church.

91. Why is this office prescribed for the members of the Third Order?

Because the Third Order is a true religious order. Hence, the members thereof are to be regarded as religious living in the world, and as such they have the obligation as well as the privilege of sharing in the worship of praise daily offered to God by religious, strictly so-called.

92. What does the Rule say regarding the divine office?

“Tertiaries who are ecclesiastics, inasmuch

as they read the Psalms daily, need do no more under this heading." Laymen who recite neither the canonical prayers nor the prayers in honor of Mary, commonly known as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, must say each day twelve "Our Fathers," "Hail Marys," and "Glories," unless they are prevented from doing so by ill-health.

93. Does the Rule impose on clerical Tertiaries any special obligation regarding the divine office?

No; the Rule does not impose on them any special obligation in this respect since they are already obliged to say the divine office by the law of the Church.

94. What form of prayer is prescribed for lay Tertiaries?

Lay Tertiaries are obliged to recite either the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin or the office of the twelve "Our Fathers," "Hail Marys," and "Glories."

95. At what time of the day should lay Tertiaries say their office?

They may say their office at any time convenient to them.

96. May Tertiaries be dispensed from reciting their office?

Yes; they may be dispensed, but only for the reason of ill-health.

97. What should those Tertiaries do who can not find time to recite their daily office?

A good Tertiary will always find time to say his office. In case, however, it should be impossible for him to say the entire office, he will say at least a part of it, or perform some other good work instead.

98. Does any special merit or efficacy attach to the divine office?

Yes; the divine office is more meritorious and more efficacious than any other private prayer, because it is the prayer of the Church, the beloved Spouse of Christ.

99. What is prescribed regarding the making of one's last will?

The Rule says, "Let those who have to make wills, dispose betimes of their property by bequest."

100. What does this precept imply?

It does not imply that Tertiaries must deprive themselves of the dominion or the enjoyment of their earthly goods, but only that

they make their wills in good time.

101. Why does the Rule impose this obligation on Tertiaries?

The Rule imposes this obligation on Tertiaries in order that they may practice the virtue of detachment and the spirit of poverty, and may cut short any quarrel such as generally arises in a family or a society at the death of an intestate person.

102. Why should Tertiaries faithfully observe this injunction?

They should faithfully observe this injunction in order to provide for the peace of their own souls and that of their families.

CHAPTER VIII

GOOD EXAMPLE—EXERCISES OF PIETY

103. What does the Rule say on the subject of good example?

The Rule says that in their home life Tertiaries should “study to lead others by their good example.”

104. Wherein does a good example exist?

It consists in fulfilling, always and everywhere, whether in public or in private, one's duties, particularly those of one's state of life.

105. Which is the first duty of one's state?

It is the duty of fulfilling, in a Christian manner, one's obligations toward the various members of one's family. This is a duty of primary importance, and he who is negligent in this, can not be a worthy member of the Third Order.

106. How should this duty be performed?

It should be performed in accordance with the will of God. Husbands and wives should, therefore, preserve inviolate their mutual marriage promise; parents should bring up their children in the fear of God; and children, on their part, should revere, love, and obey their parents.

107. How should mothers and mistresses of the household set a good example?

They should set a good example by governing their subjects according to the principles of justice, charity, and patience and by re-

gulating the affairs of the household according to the laws of order and economy.

108. How should a Tertiary engaged in business conduct himself?

He should endeavor to edify his customers by his willingness to serve them and by conducting his business along the lines of honesty.

109. How should a Tertiary laborer give a good example?

He should give a good example by conscientiously performing the work assigned to him, without, however, neglecting the service of God and the care of his soul.

110. How may Tertiaries edify their fellow parishioners?

Tertiaries may edify the other members of the parish by assisting regularly at holy Mass and at the other exercises of devotion, and by taking an active part in everything that concerns the welfare of the parish.

111. What should be the attitude of Tertiaries on parochial affairs?

In accordance with their vocation, their attitude should be one of humility and self-sacrifice. It should, therefore, be their am-

bition not to rule the affairs of the parish, but to serve in executing the commands of their ecclesiastical superiors.

112. How should Tertiaries conduct themselves toward their priests?

Being disciples of Saint Francis, who during his lifetime had the highest regard for priests, Tertiaries should, at all times and under all circumstances, show respect and obedience to the ministers of God.

113. What does the Rule say regarding exercises of piety?

The Rule says, "Let them study to promote pious practices and all that is good."

114. Does the Rule specify these pious practices?

No; the Rule does not specify what pious practices should be promoted; it contents itself with recommending piety in general.

115. How should a Tertiary perform his exercises of piety?

Having prudently chosen such exercises as are best suited to his vocation and to his needs, the Tertiary should strive to perform them faithfully and devoutly.

116. What place should these exercises occupy in the Tertiary's spiritual life?

These exercises should never become a hindrance in fulfilling one's other duties; hence, while striving to remain faithful to his pious practices, the Tertiary should, nevertheless, maintain a certain freedom in performing them.

CHAPTER IX

BAD LITERATURE—FRATERNAL CHARITY

117. What does the Rule enjoin on Tertiaries in regard to bad literature?

The Rule says, "Let them not allow any books or papers from which any injury to virtue can be feared, to be brought into their houses or read by those who are under their care." This precept is based on the natural law, which forbids us to expose ourselves to voluntary occasions of sin and to cooperate in the evil actions of others.

118. What does this passage of the Rule imply?

It implies a twofold negative precept,

namely, not to allow bad literature to be brought into one's house, and not to allow those over whom one is placed to read bad books or papers.

119. What is, therefore, the duty of parents and masters?

It is their duty to keep careful watch over the reading of their charges and to forbid them all books and papers that might be injurious to their faith or virtue.

120. Is there any excuse for reading bad books or papers?

No; for the common Christian, there is none whatever, and one can not sufficiently deplore the blindness of so many who, in spite of admonitions to the contrary, wilfully poison their minds by reading irreligious or immoral books and papers.

120. What does the Rule prescribe regarding the mutual relations of Tertiaries?

The Rule prescribes, "Let them sedulously exercise kindness and charity among themselves." These words recall to the minds of Tertiaries the favorite commandment of our divine Savior and the touching admonitions

of his faithful servant St. Francis regarding fraternal charity.

122. What is the extent of this charity?

This charity should embrace all men without exception; hence, not only the members of one's family or fraternity but also strangers and enemies.

123. What is the chief characteristic of the charity of Tertiaries?

According to the Rule, it is kindness or benevolence, which consists in wishing well to others from all our heart.

124. How should this benevolence show itself?

It should show itself not only in words but also in deeds, for charitable deeds are the best proof of a benevolent disposition.

125. Which are the commonest faults against charity?

The commonest faults against charity are those of the tongue; against these, therefore, Tertiaries should be particularly on their guard if they would not destroy charity in themselves and in others.

126. What does the Rule say regarding violations of charity?

It says that Tertiaries should “take care whenever they can do so to settle quarrels.” Hence, it is their special duty to act as peacemakers.

127. How should Tertiaries fulfill this duty?

Tertiaries should endeavor to heal discords by reconciling those at odds. In this matter, however, they should be guided by the rules of prudence, and if they are wanting in the necessary tact, they should refer the question at issue to their superiors, or recommend the affair to God in devout prayer.

128. What is the scope of this precept?

According to their Rule, Tertiaries are required to settle quarrels “whenever they can do so;” that is to say, within and without the Order, in private and in public life.

129. What obligation does the Rule impose on Tertiaries in regard to oaths?

The Rule prescribes that they “never take an oath except in case of necessity.” This precept implies nothing but what is already contained in the second commandment of God.

CHAPTER X

SPECIAL EXERCISES OF PIETY—MUTUAL AID

130. What does the Rule prescribe in regard to the examination of one's conscience?

The Rule prescribes that Tertiaries should examine their conscience nightly.

131. Why was this precept given particularly to Tertiaries?

Because Tertiaries should be persons, not merely of ordinary religious fidelity, but of deep and consistent piety, and there is no spiritual exercise so conducive to piety and religiousness as the daily examen of conscience.

132. In what way does this practice aid Tertiaries in acquiring perfection?

It aids them in acquiring perfection by revealing to them not only their daily transgressions but also their predominant passions, which are responsible for most of their sins, and which constitute the chief drawback to their spiritual progress.

133. How should Tertiaries make their daily examen that it may be conducive to their spiritual progress?

They should make it not in a slipshod and cursory way but with method and earnestness.

134. On what points should they examine themselves?

They should examine themselves on the commandments of God and on the precepts of the Rule.

135. What does the Rule inculcate on Tertiaries in regard to hearing Mass?

The Rule says, "Those who can conveniently do so, should assist daily at Mass;" hence, those whose circumstances allow, should make a practice of assisting at Mass every day, or at least as often as they can conveniently do so in order to become partakers of the inestimable spiritual blessings of which this august Sacrifice is the source and center.

136. How may Tertiaries who can not assist at Mass daily, comply with the spirit of this injunction?

They may do so by attending Mass on Sundays with punctuality and reverence, and

by trying to induce as many negligent Catholics as possible to do likewise.

137. What method should Tertiaries follow in hearing Mass?

A good and easy way to hear Mass devoutly, is to follow the prayer book or to recite the Rosary of the sorrowful mysteries; a better method, however, is that of St. Leonard of Port Maurice, which is found in almost all Third Order manuals.

138. What does the Rule say regarding monthly meetings of the fraternity?

The Rule says briefly, "They will attend the monthly meeting, of which the Prefect will give notice." Attendance at these meetings is necessary to foster and maintain in the members the Tertiary spirit.

139. Should Tertiaries easily dispense themselves from such attendance?

Tertiaries who have at heart the interests of their Order, will not easily dispense themselves from attending the monthly meeting, lest, by their example, they induce others to do the same, and thus bring on the ruin of their fraternity.

140. What does the Rule enjoin on Tertiaries in the matter of contributions?

“They will contribute—each according to his means—to a common fund, from which the poorer members of the association may be relieved, especially in time of sickness; or from which provision may be made for the dignity of divine worship.”

141. How should Tertiaries fulfill this injunction of the Rule?

They should do so generously and discreetly; that is, each member should contribute according to his means, and no one should contribute above his means.

142. Why should Tertiaries be particularly faithful in complying with this precept?

Because care for the poor and concern for the dignity of divine worship were two of the characteristic traits of St. Francis; hence, they should be likewise the distinguishing features of all who aspire to the perfection of his Rule.

143. What special duty does the Rule impose on the Perfects in regard to sick members?

The Rule says, “Let the Prefects either

visit in person any member who is ill, or send some one else to perform the offices of charity.”

144. What does this precept imply?

It implies that the duty of visiting the sick is specially incumbent on the Prefect of each fraternity; when he, however, is unable for any reason to make these visits of charity, he may delegate some one else to call in his stead.

145. What are the Prefects commanded to do in a case of serious illness of a member?

They are commanded to “urge the sick man, by warning and persuasion, to attend in time to the matters which concern the purifying of his soul.”

146. What are Tertiaries to observe in regard to the funeral of a deceased member?

“At the funeral of a deceased member, the Tertiaries who belong to the same town, and those visiting it, should assemble and say a third of the prayers to Mary instituted by Father Dominic—that is, the Rosary,—for the heavenly comfort of the dead man.”

147. What else does the Rule prescribe for the relief of the dead members?

The Rule prescribes that “priests during the holy Sacrifice, and the lay members after having approached, if possible, the Holy Eucharist, should piously and readily offer up their prayers for the eternal repose of the deceased brother” (or sister).

CHAPTER XI

ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE THIRD ORDER

148. What do you understand by a fraternity of the Third Order?

A fraternity is an association of Tertiaries canonically established, with the permission of the bishop, by the religious superiors of the Franciscan Order or by priests specially delegated to this end.

149. What persons are capable of forming a fraternity?

The persons capable of forming a fraternity are the professed members of the Third Order Secular, united in a sufficient number to insure the progress of the Tertiary congregation.

150. How should the Tertiaries be disposed toward their fraternity?

The Tertiaries should love their fraternity, and should interest themselves in everything that pertains to its welfare either by laboring to recruit and to organize it or by devoting themselves to the good works prescribed or advocated by it.

151. What is prescribed in regard to the offices of a fraternity?

The Rule says, "The offices are to be assigned in the meetings of the associates."

152. How are these offices assigned?

They are assigned either by appointment of the Visitor or of the Director or by election of the professed members of the congregation.

153. How long do the officials remain in office?

The Rule says, "These offices shall be held for three years."

154. Are the members free to decline an office?

On this point, the Rule declares that "no

one can, without good reason, refuse any office tendered him.”

155. How should the office-holders discharge their duties?

The Rule says in a general way, “no one is to discharge the duties of his office negligently.”

156. What should the officials bear in mind?

They should bear in mind that upon their zeal, prudence, docility, and tact depend the usefulness and efficiency, if not the very life and existence of the fraternity.

157. By what name are the superiors of the Third Order collectively designated?

They are called the council or discretory, the members of which have a deliberative voice in all matters of the fraternity.

158. Which is the chief office in a fraternity?

It is that of the Reverend Director without whom nothing of importance can be decided or transacted.

159. Who is next in office after the Director?

Next in office after the Director is the Prefect.

160. Which is the principal office after that of Prefect?

It is that of Assistant, whose duty it is to preside at the meetings and to conduct the business of the fraternity in the absence of the Director and of the Prefect.

161. Is there any other important charge besides those mentioned?

Yes; it is that of Master and Mistress of Novices, who are appointed in the larger fraternities to assist the superiors in instructing the novices.

162. Which are the other offices usually assigned in a fraternity?

They are those of secretary, treasurer, sacristan, infirmarian or nurse, and councilors.

163. What is the means of preserving the discipline of the Third Order?

This means is the canonical visit, concerning which the Rule says, "The Visitor will make diligent enquiry to see whether the rules are observed with sufficient strictness. For this purpose, he will, every year or oftener, if need be, visit the places where the societies are established, and will call a meeting, at

which all the prefects and all members of the association have been ordered to attend.”

164. Which are the powers of the Visitor and the duties of the Tertiaries toward him?

These powers and duties are clearly indicated by the Rule, which ordains, “Should the Visitor recall any associate to his duty by an admonition or command, or should he assign him any salutary penance, such associate will receive the admonition with modesty, and will not refuse to perform the penance.”

165. Who are to be appointed to the office of Visitor?

“The Visitors are to be chosen from the First Franciscan Order or from the Third Order Regular, and the custodes or guardians will select them when asked to do so. Laymen are excluded from the office of Visitor.”

166. What does the Rule ordain in regard to disobedient members?

“Disobedient or offending members are to be admonished of their duty three times; in the event of further disobedience, they will be bidden to leave the Order.”

167. How does the Rule oblige the members?

“Those who commit any breach of these rules, do not thereby incur the guilt of sin except in so far as they at the same time offend against the divine law or the laws of the Church.”

168. May a person be dispensed from any provision of the Rule?

“Should there be any serious and good cause to prevent any one from observing any provisions of the Rule, such person may be dispensed from that part of the Rule, or the regulation may be prudently commuted.”

169. Who has power to dispense from the Rule?

The faculty or power of granting such dispensation or commutation rests with the superiors of the Franciscan Order. By special delegation, other priests may also dispense from the Rule.



CHAPTER XII

INDULGENCES—PRIVILEGES—SPIRIT OF THE THIRD ORDER

170. What is an indulgence?

An indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin by the application of the superabundant merits and satisfactions of our Savior, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saints.

171. How many kinds of indulgences are there?

There are two kinds; namely, plenary and partial indulgences.

172. Which are the conditions usually required to gain a plenary indulgence?

The conditions commonly required are: confession, communion, and prayers for the intention of the Holy Father.

173. Is there any time or place specified for gaining indulgences?

There are indulgences for the gaining of which the Church has specified neither time nor place; a great number of them, however,

may be gained only on certain days and in certain places.

174. Is the Third Order rich in indulgences?

Yes; it is very rich in indulgences, plenary and partial; and these spiritual favors, apart from the many other graces and advantages enjoyed by the Tertiaries, ought to be a powerful inducement to enter the Order.

175. What is the Papal Blessing?

It is a solemn invocation by which the Holy Father the Pope calls down the divine assistance on the faithful, and with which there is connected a plenary indulgence.

176. Does the Holy Father sometimes delegate others to bestow this blessing?

Yes; the Holy Father frequently empowers bishops and priests to bestow this blessing in his name. The Directors of the Third Order enjoy this privilege in virtue of their office.

177. What is the general absolution?

It is a solemn invocation which partakes of the nature of a sacramental, and to which there is attached a plenary indulgence.

178. What is the Franciscan Crown?

It is the rosary of the seven joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the recitation of which the faithful may gain a plenary indulgence.

179. Are Tertiaries required to have beads specially blessed to gain this indulgence?

No; Tertiaries may gain the indulgence without beads specially blessed or, for that matter, without any beads whatever.

180. Is it necessary to meditate on the mysteries while reciting this rosary?

No; meditation on the mysteries is not required; it is sufficient to recite the Paters and Aves prescribed.

181. What is meant by the Franciscan spirit?

As every other religious institution, the Third Order also has its proper spirit, which is no other than the spirit of the Seraphic Founder, whose aim it was to imitate as closely as possible our Savior Jesus Christ.

182. How should a Tertiary imitate our Savior?

The Tertiary should strive to become like to him in his humility, detachment from earthly things, and spirit of penance.

183. How may Tertiaries become imbued with the Franciscan spirit?

By studying the life and works, the teaching and principles of pious persons of the Order, particularly of St. Francis and of the Saints and Blessed of his three Orders.



PRAYER OF A TERTIARY TO ST. FRANCIS

O Seraphic St. Francis, my beloved Father, protector of the poor, glorious patriarch of thy three great Orders, with tender love and veneration I kneel before thee and kiss the sacred stigmata with which our divine Savior adorned thee. I thank thee for having numbered me among thy children. This grace is so sublime, that I could never have merited it for myself; and it brings with it an endless chain of heaven's choicest blessings. How shall I ever be able to show thee sufficient gratitude for all these favors?

O holy Father, help me ever to love the Third Order most tenderly. Let me consider it as my spiritual home and my paradise on earth, that I may, ever mindful of my holy profession, keep the commandments of God and the Church, and observe most faithfully even the smallest details of the Rule. For, only then shall I perceive the wholesome effects of the blessing which thou, in thy dying hour, didst impart to thy beloved children. Bless me, therefore, kind Father, bless thy unworthy child, that I may persevere in the conscientious observance of the Rule of the Third Order until the end of my life. Amen.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 961 107 0

